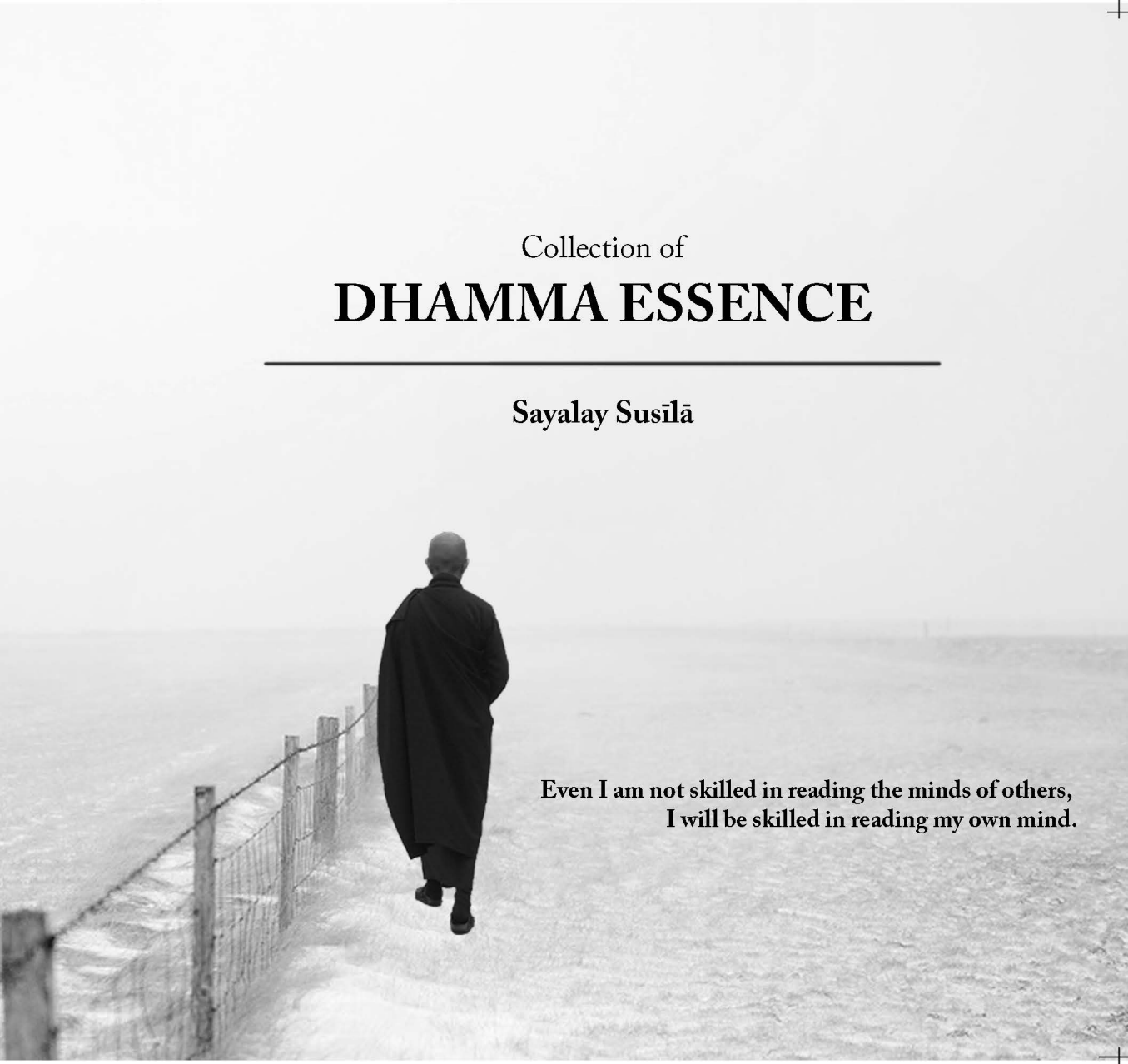


Collection of
DHAMMA ESSENCE

Sayalay Susilā




**Even I am not skilled in reading the minds of others,
I will be skilled in reading my own mind.**

CONTENTS

6	On Vigilance
8	The Burden
10	Total Equanimity
12	Eight Wordly Conditions
14	From Darkness to Light
16	The Power of Concentration
18	Contemplation of Mind
20	Making the Mind Mature for Liberation
22	Have You Ever Questioned Your Thoughts?
24	The Purposes of the Practice
26	Do Not Trust Your Mind
28	Dealing with the Hindrances
30	Do you deal with your painful feeling skillfully?





32	Move In Your Own Resort
34	Learning from the Pain
36	Seven Treasures
38	The Dhamma and Not the Dhamma
40	States that Entail Suffering
42	Investigation of the Dhamma (Dhamma-vicaya)
47	Fragrance
48	Dealing with Defilements
52	The Healing Power of Compassion
56	Moment to Moment Practice
60	Dependent Origination
64	The Development of the Faculties
65	Five Contemplations for Everyone



CONTENTS

- | | |
|----|--|
| 66 | Life and Death |
| 68 | Synopsis of Four Noble Truths |
| 72 | The Teacher of the Dhamma |
| 74 | An Island Unto Oneself |
| 75 | Happiness |
| 76 | Advantages of Contemplating Impermanence |
| 78 | Returning to the Purity of Mind |
| 82 | Die in order to be reborn |
| 84 | Does a monk benefit others? |



On Vigilance

Rouse yourself!
Sit up!
What good is there in sleeping?
For those afflicted by disease (suffering),
struck by the arrow (craving),
what sleep is there?

Rouse yourself!
Sit up!
Resolutely train yourself to attain peace.
Do not let the king of death,
seeing you are careless, lead you astray and dominate you.

Go beyond
this clinging
—to which devas and men are attached, and seek.
Do not waste your opportunity.
When the opportunity has passed
they sorrow when consigned to hell.

Negligence is a taint,
and so is the greater negligence growing from it.

By earnestness and understanding
withdraw the arrow of sensual passions.

Snp 2.10





Walk the Noble Eightfold Path

The Burden

At Savatthi. "Monks, I will teach you the burden, the carrier of the burden, the taking up of the burden, and the casting off of the burden. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said, "And which is the burden?"

'The five clinging-aggregates,' it should be said. Which five? Form as a clinging-aggregate, feeling as a clinging-aggregate, perception as a clinging-aggregate, fabrications as a clinging-aggregate, consciousness as a clinging-aggregate. This, monks, is called the burden.

"And which is the carrier of the burden?"

'The person,' it should be said. This venerable one with such a name, such a clan-name. This is called the carrier of the burden.

"And which is the taking up of the burden?"

The craving that makes for further becoming — accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there — i.e., craving for sensual pleasure, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.
This is called the taking up of the burden.

"And which is the casting off of the burden? The remainderless fading & cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, & letting go of that very craving. This is called the casting off of the burden."

A burden indeed are the five aggregates,
and the carrier of the burden is the person.
Taking up the burden in the world is stressful.
Casting off the burden is bliss.
Having cast off the heavy burden and not taking on another,
pulling up craving, along with its root,
one is free from hunger,
totally unbound.

(SN 22.22)

Total Equanimity

When false view, conceit and craving are uprooted, this is freedom of the heart.

On one occasion, the venerable Sariputta and his brother venerable Upasena were dwelling at Rajagaha in the Cool-grove. Now on that occasion, a viper had fallen on the venerable Upasena's body. Then the venerable Upasena, unshaken, addressed the bhikkhus thus: "Come, friends, lift this body of mine on to the bed and carry it outside before it is scattered right here like a handful of chaff"

When this was said, the venerable Sariputta, who was soon to lose his brother, also unshaken, said to the venerable Upasena: "Amazing! We do not see any alteration in the Venerable Upasena's body nor any change in his faculties while facing death."

"Friend Sariputta, for one who thinks, 'I am the eye' or 'The eye is mine'; 'I am the body' or 'The body is mine'; . . . 'I am the mind' or 'the mind is mine,' there might be alteration of the body or a change of the faculties. But, friend Sariputta, such thought does not occur to me, so why should there be any alteration in my body or any change in my faculties?"

Then those bhikkhus carried the venerable Upasena's body outside and his body was scattered right there just like a handful of chaff.

(SN:35 (69) Upasena)

The noble ones do not lament the loss of a beloved one; neither do they long for life nor reject death.

Can we also achieve that state of total equanimity?

By being constantly mindful of both our own body and mind and the bodies and minds of others, we come to realize their true nature — impermanent, suffering, and non-self. Body and mind are impermanent in the sense of constantly arising and perishing—a destruction. They are suffering in the sense of terror and fear—for being oppressed by destruction brings terror and fear. They are non-self in the sense of having no core—no fundamental unchanging self who is an abider, a doer, an experiencer, or one's own master who exercises power of control in the changing process. The conceit “I am” is given up in one who sees impermanence. Craving for life is ended in one who sees suffering in the mind and body. False view is removed in one who sees non-self.

When false view, conceit, and craving are uprooted, we remain equanimous under all circumstances.

THIS IS FREEDOM OF THE HEART



freedom

Eight Worldly Conditions

"Monks, these eight worldly conditions spin after the world, and the world spins after these eight worldly conditions. Which eight?"

*Gain, loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure, and pain.
(AN 8.6)*

"For an uninstructed person, there arise these eight worldly conditions. For a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones, there also arise these eight worldly conditions. So what difference, what distinction, what distinguishing factor is there between these two groups of persons?"

"When gain arises for an uninstructed person, he does not reflect, 'Gain has arisen for me. It is inconstant, stressful, and subject to change.' He does not discern it as it actually is. Similarly, he does not reflect wisely as they actually are when loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure, and pain arise.



His mind remains consumed with these eight worldly conditions.

"He welcomes the arisen gain, status, pleasure, and praise and rebels against the arisen loss, disgrace, censure, and pain. As he is thus engaged in welcoming and rebelling, he is not released -- from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, or despair. He is not released.

"Now, gain arises for a well-instructed disciple of the noble ones. He reflects, 'Gain has arisen for me. It is inconstant, stressful, and subject to change.' He discerns it as it actually is. Similarly, he reflects wisely as they actually are when loss, status, disgrace, censure, praise, pleasure, and pain arise. His mind does not remain consumed with these eight worldly conditions.

"He does not welcome the arisen gain, status, praise, and pleasure, or rebel against the arisen loss, disgrace, censure, and pain. As he thus abandons welcoming and rebelling, he is released from birth, aging, and death; from sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despair. He is released."

The wise, mindful practitioner ponders the changing nature of the eight worldly conditions. Desirable things don't charm his mind, and to undesirable ones he brings no resistance. His mind is unshakable, sorrowless, free from impurities, and secure. This is the highest blessing.

Make the contemplation of impermanence your refuge. – Sayalay Susilā

From Darkness to Light

*“Monks, these four persons are found existing in the world. What four?
He who is in darkness and bound for darkness; he who is in darkness, but bound for light;
he who is in light, but bound for darkness; he who is in light and bound for light.”*
(AN 4.85)

1. A person in darkness bound for darkness: In this case, a certain person is born in a low family, in the family of some wretched man in which there is little food and drink and it is hard to earn a living. Moreover, he is ill-favored, ugly, sickly, crooked, lame, or paralyzed, with no food, clothes, or dwelling. He engages in the practice of evil with body, speech, and thought. So doing, when the body breaks up, after death, he is reborn in an unhappy destination.
2. A person in darkness, but bound for light: In this case, a certain person is born in a low family...without dwelling. He engages in the practice of good with body, speech, and thought. So doing, when the body breaks up, after death, he is reborn in a happy destination, in a heavenly world.
3. A person in light, but bound for darkness: In this case, a certain person is born in a high family, a family of wealthy nobles or Brahmins, or of wealthy householders, in a family that is rich, exceedingly rich, and of great possessions. And that man is handsome, comely, and charming, possessed of supreme beauty of form. But he engages in the practice of evil with body, speech, and thought. So doing, when the body breaks up, after death, he is reborn in an unhappy destination.
4. A person who is in light and bound for light: In this case, a person is born in a high family...and of great possessions. He engages in the practice of good with body, speech, and thought. So doing, when the body breaks up, after death, he is reborn in a happy destination, in a heavenly world.

What is the cause and condition that beings are born in low or rich families? For beings to be sickly or healthy, ugly or handsome?

Beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions, and have their actions as their refuge. It is action that distinguishes beings as inferior and superior.



Darkness

Light

Generosity bears wealth; cruelty reaps illness; loving-kindness leads to beauty.

The Power of Concentration

Concentration is a condition for seeing clearly and directly into the true nature of things.

Buddha praised concentration:

One with concentration SEES things as they really are.

In our daily life, under the influence of craving, our eyes keep chasing after beautiful sights, our ears keep chasing after pleasant sounds, our nose keeps chasing after nice smells, our tongue keeps chasing after sweet tastes, our body keeps chasing after comfortable touches, and our mind keeps chasing after desirable thoughts. The mind is restless and agitated.

Such an agitated mind cannot see the true nature of things—the impermanence of the six sense-bases and six sense-objects, and the pleasant feelings born from the pleasant contact of the six sense objects.

Concentration practice—Mindfulness of Breathing

This practice will bring the awareness to a very refined state. Keep the attention under the nostrils and just be aware of the in-breath and out-breath. Do not follow the breath down to the abdomen or up to the head. Relax the body and mind, and breathe naturally. Be aware whether the breath is long or short. We do not try to make the breath longer or shorter, what is important is to remain mindful of the in-breath and out-breath.

The attitude in watching the breath is likened to a person sitting on a river bank observing the flow of the river. Whether the flow of the river is fast or slow is none of his concern. Just be a silent observer who makes gentle effort to be continuously mindful of the breath. If the mind wanders, knows it is simply “thinking” and gently bring it back to the awareness of the breath. If there is pain, ignore it. Continue to keep your attention on the breath. This is concentration practice, so we continuously keep our attention on the fixed object, i.e. the breath.

Mindfulness on the breath must be continuous from the very first moment of waking till one falls asleep. It's like rubbing two stones together to get a spark: if one only rubs for a minute here and there, the stones cool down, and getting enough heat to create a spark seems difficult. In the same way, one must make one's mindfulness on the breath continuous to light a spark of insight.

Once concentration develops, the mind will become bright, powerful, malleable, and soft. This gives rise to wisdom, the ability to see the rapid arising and ceasing of the physical and mental phenomena. Being oppressed by arising and ceasing, one feels *dukkha*, unsatisfactoriness, and becomes disenchanted with these uncontrollable phenomena. One's passion towards physical and mental phenomena fades out.

Recommended daily practice:

Sit at least one hour practicing Samatha (concentration) meditation. When not on the cushion, try to be aware of whatever object arises in mind and body, and contemplate it as impermanent, suffering and non-self.



Contemplation of Mind

“And how, bhikkhus, does a bhikkhu abide contemplating mind as mind?”

“**H**ere a bhikkhu understands mind affected by lust as mind affected by lust, and mind unaffected by lust as mind unaffected by lust. He understands mind affected by hate as mind affected by hate, and mind unaffected by hate, as mind unaffected by hate. He understands mind affected by delusion as mind affected by delusion, and mind unaffected by delusion as mind unaffected by delusion. He understands contracted mind as contracted mind, and distracted mind as distracted mind. He understands concentrated mind as concentrated mind, and unconcentrated mind as unconcentrated mind.”

INSIGHT

“In this way he abides contemplating mind as mind internally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind externally, or he abides contemplating mind as mind both internally and externally. Or else he abides contemplating in mind its arising factors, or he abides contemplating in mind its vanishing factors, or he abides contemplating in mind both its arising and vanishing factors.

Or else mindfulness that ‘there is mind’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a bhikkhu abides contemplating mind as mind. (MN 10:)”

Do you know
your ...



ATTITUDE OF THE MIND

What attitude are you practicing with? Right or wrong attitude?

The watching mind must be free from all expectations, judgment, preference and bias. Keep the mind in the middle. Watch different mental states in a dispassionate way without getting involved. Let everything come and go without reacting to it.

While watching pain, be aware of the mind that is watching the pain, not the pain. Check the reaction of the mind towards the pain. Observe that reaction as though a third party is observing another's pain.

Recognize phenomena (anger, joy, greed, heat, confusion, tension, fear, sleepiness, pain, happiness, depression, stiffness, remorse ...) as they arise. Let them be what they are, merely impersonal mental events.

Identity view stubbornly remains intact, contaminating our mental stream, a habitual reaction to almost everything that arises as body and mind. If delusion leads us to spontaneously grasp at emotions as mine, or myself, the remedy is to dis-identify and see phenomena as impersonal.

To depersonalize or dis-identify is to mentally note any arising emotion repeatedly as “mere emotion.” Look upon these mental states dispassionately. See whatever arises as foreign, as a third party, as empty or devoid of self. In this way, one frees oneself from entanglement. From a psychological point of view, this way of looking at things allows one to step back. One separates emotionally and is thereby relieved of the worry and fear that, in truth, does not belong to one. In reality, physical and mental phenomena momentarily arise, perform a function, and naturally fall away.


Making the Mind Mature for Liberation

Often, our practice will become stagnant. We are stuck. Are there ways out to move forward to liberation?

Buddha: "There are five things to make the immature mind mature for liberation. What five?"

(AN 9.3)

1. He has a wise friend, a good companion, who is well-versed in scripture and well-trained in morality, concentration, and wisdom. Such a good friend is a source for inspiration.
2. He is virtuous, seeing danger in the slightest faults. He trains seriously in the training rules he has undertaken. Impeccable virtue gladdens the mind and makes concentration easily attainable.
3. He is easily exposed to profitable talk that is suitable for opening up the mind, and that leads to absolute disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, peace, deep knowledge, complete awakening and emancipation, such as: talk on wanting little, talk on contentment, talk on complete seclusion, talk on disassociation [from others], talk on arousing energy, talk on virtue, talk on concentration, talk on wisdom, talk on freedom, and talk on knowing and seeing freedom. If he cannot get such talks easily, he should approach his wise friend and request it.



4. He strives to give up unwholesome things, knowing they are impediments for progress, and he desires to take up wholesome things. He is steadfast and firm in his endeavor. Without such persistent effort, nothing can be accomplished.

5. He is wise, endowed with wisdom that sees rising and falling with noble penetration, leading to the complete destruction of suffering. Seeing the impermanence of all compounded things is the gateway to liberation.

We should check our practice from time to time to ensure that all of these five conditions are fulfilled, leading us to liberation.

Have you ever questioned your thoughts?

When a thought arises in the mind, do you believe it immediately? If so, you have been cheated by your mind many times. Moreover, if you believe firmly in your thoughts, you are further strengthening the distorted perception of “permanency” and “self.”

If we rarely question the authenticity of arising thoughts, there is no need to talk about putting them down or letting go of them right way.

If that thought is an unwholesome one, our mind is tormented and full of unhappiness—greed, hatred, arrogance, jealousy, anxiety, fear, etc. may follow closely in succession.

In such a case, isn't the unhappiness created by ourselves?

Once we believe in that thought, we commit physical and verbal actions immediately in accordance with the deviation of our hearts (our prejudice). For example, when our interests are harmed, we firmly believe that it's because of “someone's action,” resulting in resentment towards that person. Believing that our resentment is real, an ordinary person's habitual reaction is to seek revenge impulsively. We are deceived by our mind and we think revenge can bring catharsis of hatred.

Little do we know that believing in such thoughts is the original culprit of our suffering.

Few investigate and question whether a thought is real or not, because the instinctual reaction of taking the thought as “I” or “mine” causes us to lose the ability to question and investigate the reality. Persistently grasping thoughts as “I” or “mine” further strengthens the authenticity and stability of the thoughts.

Without mindfulness and wisdom, we will be deceived by our own thoughts, haunted by them, one after another. In fact, the mind is reacting to the illusions created by itself.

At the beginning, however, these thoughts are induced by certain causes and conditions. If we can constantly investigate our own responses, it's not difficult to discover that most of the responses are built on self-centeredness and self-protection. We tend to feed the "self" to make ourselves strong and secure.

Life is like our own self-directed, self-performed drama.

We are immersed in our own roles, following the plot, becoming happy when the story is happy, becoming sad when the story is sad. However, we never think that the whole story is in fact a projection of our own thoughts.

Have we ever doubted the actuality of our thoughts?

For every thought that arises in the mind, if we can simply be aware, without reaction based on our biased perception toward like and dislike, the thought would appear as if it were a wisp of cloud drifting across the sky; it does not stay even for a moment. When the thought passes away instantaneously, it loses the ability to control our impulsive reaction.

Seeing repeatedly the empty nature of thought, our minds will let go of wrong grasping and identification of thoughts as "I" and "mine."

If we constantly contemplate all thoughts, especially emotional fluctuations, as illusory and self-created, we can be free from them and live at ease.

Have we ever doubted the actuality of our thoughts?

The Purposes of the Practice

The immediate purpose is to overcome our habitual reactions towards likes and dislikes.

In our daily life, our six sense bases are always opened to the impingement of the six sense objects, namely eye to form, ear to sound, nose to smell, tongue to taste, body to tangible objects, and mind to various thoughts. The untrained mind grasps at agreeable objects as mine with craving, as myself with identity view. But if the object is unagreeable or unpleasant, the mind rejects it compulsively. When the object is neutral, we are in dull indifference, delusively thinking that there is no feeling.

These habitual reactions give rise to three kammic potencies.

1. Current Life Effective Kamma. When one reacts with aversion, fire element in the body is excessive. This phenomenon causes one's face to turn red and the body to become hot. When a person is constantly in a state of anger, his health is also affected. The 'unhealthy' energy generated also affects others as well as the environment.

2. Next Life Effective Kamma. Craving and aversion are considered unwholesome kamma that leave behind kammic tendencies in one's life continuum. When this kamma matures, one may be reborn in a woeful state accordingly.

3. Indefinitely Effective Kamma. We are owners of our own kamma. As long as we are still cycling in the round of rebirths, this indefinitely effective kamma has the potential to come to fruition when the conditions are ripe.

So we meditate to stop our habitual reactions and undermine their kammic effects.

Ultimate Purpose

The ultimate purpose is to see the five aggregates as they really are in order to end suffering.

Suffering comes from the attachment to the five aggregates. We cling to the aggregates because we fail to see their dangers or faults. We are blinded by beauty and pleasure stimulated by the five aggregates.

Our practice is to see the five aggregates as they really are as impermanent, suffering and non-self repeatedly in order to arouse disenchantment. Being disenchanted, we become dispassionate, after which letting go of the cause of suffering (i.e., attachment) is possible.

The five aggregates are bundles of materiality, feeling, perception, fabrication and consciousness. They work together to form the conventional truth of “I.” For example when one looks (eye consciousness) at one’s image in the mirror (materiality), one perceives one’s own beauty (perception); that causes very pleasant feeling to arise, followed by delight (fabrication): “I am beautiful!” In reality, what really exist are just the characteristic, function and manifestation of five aggregates.

The compactness of continuity of consciousness creates the illusion of a permanent and substantial self existence. Consciousness arises one after another in rapid succession, performing their functions but we are unable to see the continuity of the process and we take them as self -- I am seeing, hearing, etc. Unable to break down the compactness of the continuity, we mistake the consciousness aggregate as a permanent self.

So to let go of grasping, we meditate to see the true nature of the five aggregates.



Do Not Trust Your Mind



If we are aware enough of what is happening in our minds, we probably will notice that our minds are constantly in a fight between evil and good (demon and angel).

Most of the time, the evil states of mind—such as craving, anger, jealousy, restlessness, pride, covetousness, bossiness, and defensiveness—take the upper hand over the good states because the untrained mind is still weak.

Without clear insight, we delusively think that the evil states of mind are real, and act and speak accordingly. As a result, suffering follows us “like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox,” as said in the opening of the Dhammapada.

All phe
are insu

If we see through our minds, we realize our minds are creating their own stories aimlessly. When the mind thinks of something good—maybe a past sweet memory or a future hope—it immediately becomes delighted and seizes the episode as real and stable. On the other hand, if the mind thinks of something bad, it becomes dejected, depressed, and stressed—and it seizes that episode as real and stable, too.

Thus, the mind is constantly reacting to its created false thoughts, like a madman. There is no inner peace, only turbulence. Having seen through the way in which the mind does its magic, we can become more aware of the mind and guard against being fooled again.

With persistent effort to develop mindfulness and clear comprehension, the mind reacts less. When our wisdom becomes mature and can see through all the mental states as insubstantial—as dew on a sloping lotus, as a dream, as a shadow, as bubbles—we will have reached the deathless.

Oh, King of Death, soon you will find me not.

phenomena
substantial

Dealing with the Hindrances

In a concentration practice such as mindfulness of breathing, hindrances of sensual desire, ill-will, restlessness and remorse, sloth and torpor, and doubt often arise to obsess one's mind. One way to deal with them is to replace them with their opposites:

1. Sensual desire should be replaced with the perception of repulsiveness. For example, a craving for food could be replaced with the thought of spitting out the food before swallowing. A lust for the opposite sex can be replaced by contemplating the 32 impure parts of the body.
2. Ill-will should be replaced with the thought of loving kindness and forgiveness.
3. Restlessness and remorse should be replaced with steadying the mind on the breath by counting the breath.
4. Sloth and torpor, or dullness of the mind, should be replaced with the perception of light by looking at it. The light will brighten the mind.
5. Doubt should be replaced with faith and confidence through discussion with a competent teacher.

If these antidotes fail, try to ignore the hindrances when they arise. Do not pay attention to them. Instead, increase your effort to direct your mind back to the breath.

Application of Mindfulness and Wisdom

We also can deal with the hindrances in a most direct way — by incorporating mindfulness and wisdom into the concentration practice.

Mindfulness comes face to face with any one of the hindrances that is arising at the moment, but does not react to it. When the mind does not react to the hindrances, they immediately lose the power to overwhelm the mind. Mindfulness is like the brake system in a car — it can slow down our compulsive reactions.

However, mindfulness alone is not enough. Wisdom is also needed to contemplate the dependently arising and insubstantial nature of the hindrances. For example, if you doubt your ability to achieve concentration: first, mindfulness becomes aware of the doubt, then wisdom investigates the cause of it. Wisdom can soon understand that doubt is just a phenomenon that arises due to causes and conditions, probably owing to one's improper attention — attention on discursive thought (doubting) rather than on the breath. Understanding thus, you will not grasp doubt as “I” or “mine.” It is through grasping it as “I” and “mine” that doubt seems real and persisting.

Apply the same method to other hindrances. In this way, you can transform the hindrances into a path of awakening.

Do you deal with your painful feeling skillfully?

When we experience a bodily painful feeling, our habitual reaction is to push it away compulsively simply because it is unpleasant. However, the root cause lies in our distorted perception of permanence and self. We think that the painful feeling is constant and belongs to a self. We thus sorrow, grieve, weep and become distraught.

We then feel two feelings—a bodily one and a mental one, as if we had been struck by two darts, one after the other.

Not knowing the correct way to escape from that painful feeling, most people indulge in sensual pleasures, such as drugs, sex, alcohol, etc., with the hope of getting rid of that painful feeling. While indulging in sensual pleasures, they experience pleasant feelings and immediately become addicted to them. The underlying tendency of lust is activated. As the nature of lust is to never be satiated, they become more and more lustful.

A good meditator, while experiencing a bodily painful feeling, does not succumb to the habitual reaction of aversion and wrong view. Repeatedly he contemplates painful feeling as painful feeling, painful feeling as impermanent, as changing, as conditioned, as not a self. Seeing that feelings are like bubbles, forming and dissolving immediately, he feels them detached. Without attachment, he is not agitated. Without agitation, he is free from sorrow, lamentation, grief and despair. He feels only one feeling—a bodily one, not a mental one.

Knowing the correct way to escape from the painful feeling, he does not pursue sensual pleasure. Thus the underlying tendency of lust is not activated in him.



Do you want to be free from being struck by two darts?

Contemplate wisely.
Painful feeling is just a painful feeling,
is impermanent, is conditioned and is not a self.

Move In Your Own Resort

In a certain forest live many monkeys. Along the monkey trails, hunters set out traps of pitch to catch the monkeys. The monkeys who are not foolish and greedy avoid the pitch when they see it from afar. But if a monkey who is foolish and greedy approaches the pitch, he seizes the pitch with his hand and gets caught there. Thinking, "I will free my hand," he seizes it with his other hand and gets caught there. Thinking, "I will free both hands," he seizes it with his foot and gets caught there. Thinking, "I will free both hands and my foot," he seizes it with his other foot and gets caught there. Thinking, "I will free both hands and feet," he applies his muzzle to it and gets caught there. Thus, that monkey, trapped at five points, lies there screeching. He has met with calamity and disaster and the hunter can do with him as he wishes. (SN 47: 7)

When we, as practitioners, stray outside our own resort into the domain of others, we meet with the same calamity, like that monkey. Evil gains access to us.

And what is not our own resort, but the domain of others? It is the five cords of sensual pleasure –

- forms cognizable by the eye that are desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, and tantalizing.
- Sounds cognizable by the ear...
- Odors cognizable by the nose ...
- Tastes cognizable by the tongue ...
- Tactile objects cognizable by the body that are desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, and tantalizing.

To avoid attack from evil, we should move in our own resort, or our own ancestral domain. What is our own ancestral domain? The four foundations of mindfulness — contemplation of the body, feelings, mind, and phenomena.

By directly seeing that the body is composed of the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, we gradually lose our perception of “self.”

Because feeling activates craving, by directly seeing all feelings as suffering due to their change, we keep craving under control.

By directly seeing different states of mind as impersonal, we come to know their illusive nature and will not be cheated by them through compulsive reaction.

By seeing all phenomena as impermanent, we let go of the conceit “I am.”

Move in your own resort so that you will be protected.

Learning from the Pain

Pain is our great teacher! It makes us awaken to the truth.

One of the challenges we have to face in life and during meditation is pain. Life is assailed with many different types of pain. Similarly during meditation, pain may arise in different parts of the body: the knees, back, feet, or shoulders. We dislike the pain, so we struggle to get rid of it. But, often the pain comes back and we become upset.

Pain is our great teacher, and it offers us valuable lessons that we can all benefit from learning:



1. No one likes pain because it hurts. If we ourselves dislike being hurt, then we should consider that others feel the same way. So pain reminds us to practice self-restraint to avoid inflicting pain on others psychologically, verbally, or physically.

2. We learn that our bodies are unsatisfactory. Without pain we delusively go about thinking that our cherished bodies provide happiness. But now pain seems endless, one after another! The mind becomes extremely agitated, and we want to quickly do away with the pain. Such a reaction makes the mind and body even hotter and the pain unbearable. If we turn to watch the mind, we realize that it is the mind that knows the pain. Without mind, physical pain cannot be apprehended. Having a mind is also distressing (*dukkha*). As it turns out, body and mind are not our refuge, not our protection, they are devoid of satisfaction. This is the lesson of pain in accordance with truth.

3. We learn about the impersonal nature of “our” body from pain. It does not yield to our wishes. Pain arises because of an imbalance of elements, mostly due to excessive hardness, heat, and vibration. It is merely an aggregate of materiality. It is our identification with and clinging to pain as “my pain” that makes it unbearable.

Contemplate pain as not mine, not myself, mere elements, then the observing mind can grow dispassionate and detached from it.

We use the same practice to face illness and death.



Seven Treasures

Ugga, the king's chief minister, said to the Blessed One: "It's amazing, lord, and awesome, how prosperous Migara Rohaneyya is, how great his treasures!" The Buddha replied: "But what is his property, Ugga? What are his great treasures?" "One hundred thousand pieces of gold, lord, to say nothing of his silver." "That is treasure, Ugga. I don't say that it's not. And that treasure is open to fire, floods, kings, thieves, & hateful heirs. But these seven treasures are not open to fire, flood, kings, thieves, or hateful heirs. Which seven?"

1. Treasure of conviction

One has conviction of the virtues of the Tathāgata: "Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge and conduct, well-gone, knower of the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine and human beings, awakened, blessed."



2. Treasure of virtue

One abstains from taking life, from stealing, from illicit sexual conduct, from lying, from taking intoxicants that cause heedlessness.

3. Treasure of conscience

One feels shame at bodily, verbal and mental misconduct.

4. Treasure of concern

One feels concern for the consequences of bodily, verbal and mental misconduct.

5. Treasure of listening

One has heard much, has retained what he has heard. Whatever teachings are admirable in the beginning, admirable in the middle, admirable in the end, that – in their meaning and expression – proclaim the holy life that is entirely complete and pure: those he has listened to often, retained, discussed, accumulated, examined with his mind, and well-penetrated by views.

6. Treasure of generosity

One is cleansed of the stain of stinginess, freely generous, open-handed, devoted to charity, responsive to requests, delighting in relinquishment.

7. Treasure of wisdom

One is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising and passing away – noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress.

Whoever, man or woman, has these treasures, has great treasure in the world that no human or divine being can excel.

(AN 7.7)

The Dhamma and Not the Dhamma

Buddha:

"Gotami, the qualities of which you may know, 'These qualities lead to passion, not to dispassion; to being fettered, not to being unfettered; to accumulating, not to shedding; to self-aggrandizement, not to modesty; to discontent, not to contentment; to entanglement, not to seclusion; to laziness, not to aroused persistence; to being burdensome, not to being unburdensome':

You may categorically hold,

**'This is not the Dhamma,
this is not the Vinaya,
this is not the Teacher's instruction.'**

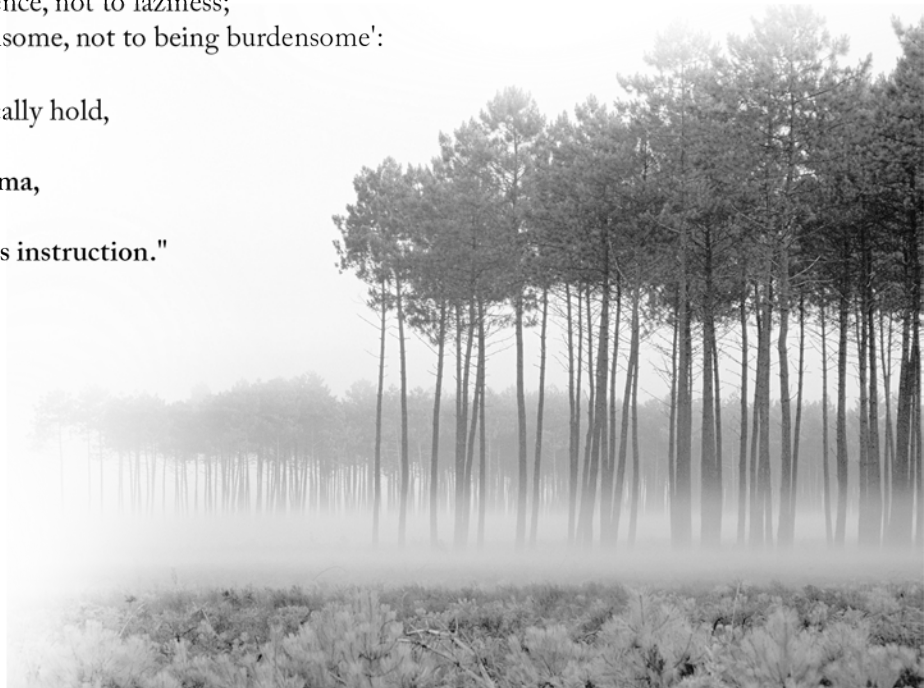


"As for the qualities of which you may know,

"These qualities lead to dispassion, not to passion;
to being unfettered, not to being fettered;
to shedding, not to accumulating;
to modesty, not to self-aggrandizement;
to contentment, not to discontent;
to seclusion, not to entanglement;
to aroused persistence, not to laziness;
to being unburdensome, not to being burdensome':

You may categorically hold,

**"This is the Dhamma,
this is the Vinaya,
this is the Teacher's instruction."**



States That Entail Suffering

“Bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu understands as they really are the origin and the passing away of all states whatsoever that entail suffering, then sensual pleasures have been seen by him in such a way that as he looks at them sensual desire, sensual affection, and sensual passion do not lie latent within him in regard to sensual pleasures.” (SN 35.244)

“When a yogi is conducting himself in such a way, if occasionally, due to a lapse of mindfulness, evil, unwholesome intentions connected with the fetters arise in him, slow might be the arising of his mindfulness, but then he quickly abandons them, dispels them, puts an end to them.” — Buddha

The states that entail suffering refer to the five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, volitional formations and consciousness. Why is it so? It is because when the five aggregates exist, various kinds of suffering exist, such as suffering that arises from wounds, death, torture, sorrow, fear, depression and anxiety. By contemplating the five aggregates repeatedly, one gradually sees their arising and passing away to the extent that one is able to look at sensual pleasure without desire arising. One regards sensual pleasure as dangerous and full of faults.

Suppose a man were to enter a thorny forest. There would be thorns all around him – in front, behind, to the left and right, thorns below and above him. How can he protect himself so as not to be pricked by the thorns? He can protect himself by means of mindfulness. A thorn can be compared to anything that has a pleasing and agreeable nature since it activates craving. Craving is the origin of all sufferings and it is the cause of repeated births. Pricked by it, one suffers in this life and the life after.

Without setting up mindfulness, when eyes see a form, ears hear a sound, etc, when one is intent upon a pleasing form and repelled by a displeasing form, then forms and sound overwhelm one; if one gets overwhelmed by forms and sound, one gives in to defilements; in this way one is corrupted.

Having understood the thorn, one practices restraint. The way of restraint is

1. Clear comprehension of pasture (*gocara sampajañña*): one focuses on one's concentration object all the time so that defilements do not arise through unguarded sense faculties.
2. Clear comprehension of non-delusion (*asammoha sampajañña*): one always contemplates the three characteristics of impermanence, suffering and non-self of formations.

Such a person is called the one who has overcome the desire for the six pleasing sense objects. He has overcome greed, hatred and delusion that bring trouble, that result in suffering, and that lead to future birth, aging, and death. "It is this way, that one is uncorrupted."



Investigation of the Dhamma (Dhamma-vicaya)

Discerning mental factors (cetasikas)—seeing them one-by-one as non-self—is important to remove the perception of self in regards to mental phenomena. In the Anupada Sutta (“One-By-One As They Occur”), the Buddha cited how Venerable Sariputta investigated the mental factors associated with jhāna one-by-one and was able to abandon all the mental defilements through direct knowledge, resulting in his awakening.

The process of repeatedly investigating the five aggregates in the light of Insight Knowledge:

The enlightenment factor of investigation, which is the same as wisdom (pañña), is indispensable to the practice. Without wisdom, the ignorance which obscures the four noble truths cannot be eradicated.

Mindfulness of breathing, while frequently practiced as a method for developing concentration, can also be used as a path to awakening by serving as an object of investigation. Use mindfulness of breathing to develop a certain degree of concentration, then take the breath as the object of investigation by contemplating the following mental factors:

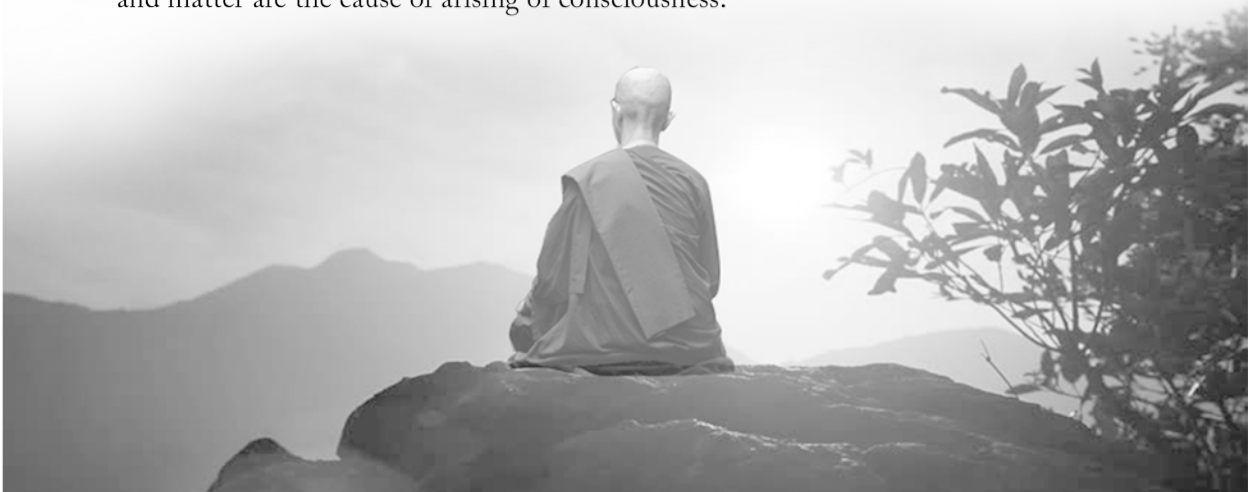
1. Who knows the breath? *Consciousness.*
2. Who causes the touching of the breath on the nostrils? *Contact.*
3. Who feels the pleasantness of the breath? *Feeling.*
4. Who perceives the breath as long or short? *Perception.*
5. Who directs the mind towards the breath? *Attention.*
6. Who does not forget the breath? *Mindfulness.*
7. Who makes the effort to know, This is the breath? *Effort.*
8. Who repeatedly places the mind on the breath? *Sustained application of mind.*
9. Who acts upon the breath and accumulates wholesome kamma? *Volition.*
10. Who unifies all the mental factors on the breath? *Concentration.*

Investigate the Mental Factors as Non-Self.

Remind yourself: contact, feeling, perception, attention, mindfulness, effort, sustained application of mind, volition, and concentration are not me, not mine, and not myself. They are merely consciousness and mental factors with their respective characteristics. For example, consciousness has the characteristic of knowing an object, feeling feels the pleasantness of the breath, and so on.

Owing to contact¹—the coming together of breath, body sensitivity, and consciousness—many mental factors come to be, performing their functions and immediately passing away. When you can recognize them one-by-one along with their functions and the causes for their arising, the non-self nature of mental phenomena becomes evident. The perception of “I” dissolves.

¹ Contact is the cause of arising of feeling, perception, and volitional formations; mind and matter are the cause of arising of consciousness.



Investigate the Mental Factors as Impermanent.

As the mental factors arise and pass away while you observe the breath, you further understand that mental factors are impermanent, subject to change and destruction. Seeing impermanence further enhances the insight into the non-self nature of all mental factors.

Investigate the Breath in Terms of Five Aggregates.

Investigate further: What is the breath? Upon examination, you will realize that the breath—which is the form aggregate—consists of the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, with the wind element as the predominant factor. You should also contemplate:

- The feeling that feels the pleasantness of the breath is the feeling aggregate;
- The perception that perceives the breath is the perception aggregate;
- The attention, effort, sustained application of mind, mindfulness, and volition are the volitional formations aggregate; and
- The consciousness that knows the breath is the consciousness aggregate.

Investigate How the Five Aggregates Are Subject to Identity View and Clinging.

These five aggregates are subject to view. We cling to each aggregate as “myself.” Consider: Don’t we identify the breath as myself, our different feelings as myself, our perception as myself, intentional volition as myself, and consciousness as myself?

The form aggregate—the breath—is a physical phenomenon. Feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness aggregates are mental phenomena. So, all that actually exists is physical and mental phenomena—in other words, mind and matter. Mind and matter are not a self.

These five aggregates are also subject to clinging. We cling to the five aggregates as “mine” with craving. Why do we crave for the five aggregates? Because we delusively think they are the source of our happiness. If we did not have a form aggregate (body), the pleasant feeling arising through sensual enjoyment would be imperceptible. Because we have a form aggregate, we enjoy various sense objects through the sense bases. The pleasant feeling stimulates craving, making the mind enchanted with pleasant feeling.



Investigate the Five Aggregates in Terms of the Four Noble Truths.

These five aggregates subject to clinging are the truth of suffering that must be fully known. Without fully knowing their inherent impermanent and suffering nature, it is impossible to let go of the craving for them.

The craving for the five aggregates is the origin of suffering. Craving comes from not knowing correctly the nature of the five aggregates. Because of not knowing—the characteristic of ignorance—we desire for and hold on to the five aggregates. Nurtured by craving, the five aggregates come to be again and again. When the five aggregates are built up, what follows is the suffering of aging, sickness, death, separation from the beloved, association with the hated, and the inability to get what one desires.

Cessation of suffering is attained by removing the desire and craving for the five aggregates. This can be achieved only by direct knowledge of the three universal characteristics of the five aggregates—impermanence, suffering, and non-self. Thus the path to the cessation of suffering is to repeatedly contemplate the five aggregates as impermanent, subject to destruction, as an affliction, as a dart, as suffering, as empty, and as non-self, until the mind gets disenchanted and weary of the five aggregates.

Then one lets go of clinging. When there is no clinging, the mind is not agitated; when there is no agitation, the mind arrives at peace. This is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.

Fragrance

The venerable Ānanda went to see the Exalted One and said “Venerable sir, there are these three fragrances that spread along with the wind, but not against the wind: What three? The fragrance of roots, the fragrance of heartwood, and the fragrance of flowers. Venerable sir, is there any fragrance that spreads with the wind; against the wind; and both ways alike?”

“There is such a fragrance, Ānanda.”

“What is that fragrance, Venerable sir?”

“In this connection, Ānanda, in whatsoever village or district there is a woman or a man who has taken refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha; who abstains from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxicants, the basis of heedlessness; who is virtuous, of a lovely nature; who dwells at home with a heart free from the taint of stinginess, open-handed, delighting in giving up, devoted to charity—in such a case, the wise in all quarters speak praise of him or her. Moreover, the deities and spirits speak praise of him or her. This, Ananda, is the fragrance that goes with the wind, against the wind, and both ways alike.”

The fragrance of flowers goes not against the wind;
Nor the fragrance of sandalwood, musk or jasmine.
But the good person’s fragrance goes against the wind:
The fragrance of good people goes everywhere.

(AN 3.79)



Dealing with Defilements

The Buddha said, “Abandon what is not skillful. One can abandon what is unskillful. If it were not possible, I would not ask you to do it.”

The path of enlightenment is to abandon defilements from the gross to the subtle ones.

Kilesas (defilements) operate at three levels:

1. At the anusaya, or latent level, called latent defilement: The latent defilement is inactive and lies dormant. When it meets with the right conditions, it becomes active.
Example: When the eyes come into contact with an enemy, the latent defilement of anger rises to the surface and becomes the second level of defilement called obsessive defilement.
2. At the pariyuṭṭhāna, or conscious mental level, called obsessive defilement: The obsessive defilement occurs in the form of thoughts and obsessions (arising state).
Example: The mind is furious at seeing an enemy, or the mind of a man becomes lustful when meeting a charming woman.
3. At the vitikkama, or the action level: The action defilement occurs in the form of unwholesome bodily and verbal actions (transgressing).
Example: When a person is unable to control his anger upon seeing an enemy, he utters harsh speech or fights with him. Other forms of transgressing defilements are killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, back-biting, telling lies, etc.

Different levels of defilements are tackled by different means:

1. Transgressing defilements are restrained by way of morality (*sīla*). With the understanding of the law of kamma—that every action lays a habitual track within the mind—one practices restraint by abstaining from unskillful speech and action, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, back-biting, telling lies, etc. One then overcomes transgressing defilement. If we love ourselves and have compassion for all beings, we will uphold our virtues dearly.

2. Obsessive defilements are suppressed by way of concentration. When the mind is fully concentrated on a single pure object—for example the breath—the defilements cannot enter into the mind through the five senses; thus no obsessive defilement can arise from the mind.

3. Latent defilements can only be uprooted by path consciousness. This can be achieved through insight meditation. The practice is to develop wisdom to see the true nature of all conditioned things as anicca (impermanence), dukkha (suffering), and anatta (non-self). When wisdom matures, the path knowledges of stream entry, once-returned, non-returned, and Arahant will arise and uproot their respective latent defilements.



Wise attention keeps defilements at bay

In our daily lives, we frequently are assailed by obsessive defilements of lust, anger, jealousy, delusion, conceit, etc. The arising of defilements irritates the mind. If we do not control these defilements, we may perform unskillful kammās that hurt ourselves and others. Here are some antidotes to remove them:

- Lust for the opposite sex: Reflection on the impure 32 parts of the body or skeleton meditation. Both help to remove the perception of beauty and overcome lust.
- Hatred toward someone: We should realize that our enemy is our own hatred. We overcome our hatred by loving kindness, forgiveness, compassion, gratitude and equanimity.
- Jealousy: Saying “Sadhu” to others’ success is a magical mantra that turns jealousy and envy into rejoicing in others’ success.
- Attachment to five aggregates: Contemplating the impermanence of the five aggregates. Every day we witness the changes of our body, feelings, perceptions, volitional formations, and consciousness, but we do not contemplate impermanence. Thus our perception of impermanence is not strengthened. Every contemplation of impermanence helps to let go of attachment to five aggregates.

Failure to acknowledge the truth of change (anicca) is the greatest source of our suffering, as desire is based on the assumption that things do not change. —Sayalay Susilā

The Healing Power of Compassion

All beings seek happiness and avoid suffering. Paradoxically, one of the most powerful ways to achieve happiness is to care about other people's suffering.

The wish to alleviate the suffering of others is called compassion. Compassion has three progressive levels:

1. The first level is simply wishing to alleviate the suffering of others.
2. The second level is actually rendering help to the needy, motivated by an unwillingness to passively tolerate the suffering of others.
3. At the third and highest level, compassion must be reinforced by the insight that neither oneself nor the subject has any absolute reality.

Compassion counters self-centeredness. One may think that it is fine just to work for one's own benefit, so long as one does not harm others. While there is no doubt that this is true, doing this alone is not a complete way to happiness.

We always believe that inside us there is an absolute entity – the core of our being, our “self.” We hold it dearly and cherish it, while working unceasingly to please it. Such a self-cherishing attitude in fact undermines our mental and physical well-being.

A study from a psychologist in the United States revealed a correlation between excessive self-cherishing and damage to one's physical well-being. The constant obsession with “I,” “me,” and “mine” leads to early death, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

On the other hand, I have had experiences that have revealed how compassionate thought ensures mental and physical well-being. A few years ago, when I was in Los Angeles teaching a meditation retreat, a sudden and acute pain in my lower abdomen woke me up in the middle of the night. As usual, I tried to separate “myself” from the pain by contemplating unpleasant sensation as unpleasant sensation, not myself. But I was still shaken by the pain. The pain was so severe I started to groan helplessly.

As I reflected on my own misery, suddenly there arose in my heart a thought of compassion for those who were, at that moment, experiencing the same suffering as I was. Moved by that compassion, I put aside my pain and focused my attention on others’ suffering. Mentally I repeatedly wished, “May all beings be free from the same suffering I now endure.”



Amazingly, within a few minutes, I fell asleep. The next day, I woke up smiling, with only a very faint pain remaining; the acute pain had subsided. This experience strengthened my faith that as long as our mind dwells not on our own suffering, but rather on the suffering of others, the healing power of compassion will manifest itself.



Another experience two years ago reaffirmed the same truth. While in the Himalayas, I suffered a strong headache due to mountain sickness. At first, I just endured it, forgetting that I was endowed with the healing power of compassion. When the pain had become more severe and lasting, the thought of compassion suddenly flashed into my mind. I put aside my own headache and wholeheartedly generated thoughts of compassion to all others who suffered the same headache.

The compassionate mind created a dynamic energy that enabled me to see in minute detail how the pain in my head was suddenly decreasing and disappearing. This took only a few minutes. My gosh! What an amazing experience! My headache subsided like magic. The thought of compassion had created immediate healing power.

Most people live in worry and fear. Compassion makes one courageous, peaceful, and fearless.

It is holding on to the “self” that makes the mind lose its courage and stay in constant fear.

Let go of the self-centeredness, reach out and care for others. You will experience tremendous inner strength and happiness as a result.

Moment to Moment Practice

When the six sense bases come in contact with the six sense objects, an untrained person's mind chases its personal likes and rejects its personal dislikes. Every such reaction makes the mind and body agitated and creates new karma. So, how does one break this habitually conditioned chain? By practicing insight, and applying mindfulness and wisdom.

Mindfulness comes face-to-face with each object and does not forget the object of focus. It stays centered, does not react, and is free from judgment, prejudice, bias, and preference. Mindfulness recognizes and accepts – it recognizes what is arising, present, or ceasing in the body and mind at each moment, and accepts it calmly without reaction. For example, when anger is present, know that it is present. When the anger passes, know that it has gone.

Mindfulness is like the brake system in a car. It protects the mind from accidentally becoming reflexive, which can create karma that hurts oneself and others.

Wisdom removes the darkness of ignorance that conceals the three common characteristics: impermanence, suffering, and the impersonal nature of the body and mind. The body and the mind are subject to clinging, which causes suffering. Once this truth is thoroughly known, one will get disenchanted and free oneself from clinging, thereby freeing oneself from suffering as well.

- Constantly being mindful and watchful allows wisdom to see the transient nature of mind and body. By experiencing the constant arising and passing away of mind and body, one feels the suffering of being oppressed by incessant change. Whatever is subject to change and suffering cannot be regarded as a permanent self.
- To know the suffering of mind and body, observe the mind and body. It is MOST IMPORTANT to watch the mind's reaction toward bodily sensations and mental emotions that manifest as pleasant or unpleasant feelings.

The Process of Observing.

Whether observing the body, feelings, mind, or a mental object, use the following process:





RECOGNIZE IT.

Recognize what arises (anger, greed, joy, bodily pain, stiffness, heat, tension, remorse, sleepiness, depression, fear, or happiness) as it is – a mere physical and mental phenomenon.

ACCEPT IT.

Accept what is, just as it is. Do not try to resist it, which activates the underlying tendency of anger. Do not cling to it, which activates the underlying tendency of greed. Do not add stories to it, which activates fantasies and restlessness.

DIS-IDENTIFY FROM IT.

Do not identify any phenomenon as I, mine, or myself. Simply know it as a physical or mental state performing a function. See it as if you are a third party. Attend to it as alien and empty of self.

INVESTIGATE IT.

Investigate the causes of phenomena. For example, investigate why suffering arises. Through investigation, one understands that suffering is just the effect of causes and is not a permanent self.

CONTEMPLATE IMPERMANENCE (Anicca).

Mentally note impermanence many times. Why? 1) To undo and correct our distorted perception of permanence that block us from seeing things as they really are, 2) to tune the mind in with reality, 3) to prevent the arising of craving, and 4) to train the subconscious to let go, as the mind cannot cling to changing phenomena.

If contemplation of impermanence is not given attention, phenomena will remain concealed by the compactness of continuity that gives rise to the distorted perception of permanence. When one sees impermanence, the unsatisfactory and impersonal nature of phenomena also will become clear.

LET IT GO.

Do not cling to anything whatsoever, so that consciousness is not dependent on it. Let the phenomena come and go, as if watching passing clouds in the sky.

Once you are familiar with this moment-to-moment process, attend to the Five Aggregates in different ways: as impermanent, as unsatisfactory, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, and not a self. In this way, you can become liberated from clinging.

The Goal of Dhamma Is Letting Go.

Dependent Origination

*The questions “Where did ‘I’ come from? Where will ‘I’ go?”
have concerned human beings for countless lifetimes.*

This “I” is a conventional truth, an accepted way of speaking, cherished by almost everyone.

The Buddha solved this question with the exposition of the doctrine of Dependent Origination he rediscovered.

Dependent Origination is the doctrine of conditionality to show how the conventional “individual” revolves in the wheel of existence, undergoing the cycle of birth and death, and how suffering ceases by the cessation of the causes and conditions that perpetuate the cycle.

The Dependent Origination Formula

Dependent on ignorance arise karmic formations;
Dependent on karmic formations arises consciousness;
Dependent on consciousness arise mind and matter;
Dependent on mind and matter arise the six sense-bases;
Dependent on the six sense-bases arises contact;
Dependent on contact arises feeling;
Dependent on feeling arises craving;
Dependent on craving arises clinging;
Dependent on clinging arises becoming;
Dependent on becoming arises birth;
Dependent on birth arise aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair.
Thus arises this entire mass of suffering (dukkha).

The factors are mere mind and matter, not an abiding self.

Ignorance is not knowing the FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS:

the Noble Truth of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering, the Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

Because of ignorance of the Four Noble Truths, we perform physical, verbal and mental formations that pave the way to rebirth consciousness.

When birth takes place, mind and matter arise.

Dependent on mind and matter arise the six sense-bases of eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body- and mind.

When there are six sense-bases, six contacts of eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body- and mind occur.

Dependent on each contact arise three types of feeling—pleasant, unpleasant and neutral.

Feeling stimulates and initiates craving.

There are three types of craving:

* Craving for sensual pleasure — is longing for sense objects that are agreeable, beautiful, and pleasurable.

* Craving for continued existence— is associated with the wrong view of eternalism.

* Craving for non-existence after death— is associated with the wrong view of annihilationism.



Craving is the origin of suffering. Its near cause is feeling. Pay attention to feelings as impermanent, as incessantly arising and passing, as suffering, as a boil, a dart, as insecure, and as devoid of self. This way of perceiving and conceiving of feelings effectively blocks craving from arising. Just accept whatever feeling there is, as it is, with a detached and dispassionate attitude.

Buddha said:

“Recluses, whatever ascetics and brahmins in the past, present, or future regard what is in the world with a pleasant and agreeable nature as permanent, as happiness, as self, as healthy, as secure—they nurture craving. In nurturing craving they nurture suffering; they are not freed from suffering, I say.” (SN 12.66)

Dependent on craving arises clinging — those who crave for sensual pleasures gradually see their craving develop into strong sensual clinging that they are unable to let go.

Dependent on clinging arises becoming — this refers to the karmic activities, both wholesome and unwholesome, that constitute karma that generates rebirth.

Dependent on becoming arises birth — when becoming matures at the time of death, it produces future birth.

“Birth” means the first manifestation of aggregates of a living being when rebirth takes place in any existence. Correctly speaking, it is neither “the same self” nor another person that is reborn. Such terms as “person,” “personality,” “self,” “woman,” “man,” “individual,” “I,” or “you” are merely conventional expressions used for the sake of clarity and convenience.

What comes to birth is merely mind and matter. Their nature is to quickly arise and pass away. To identify with mind and body as “I,” “me,” or “mine” is to say that we are dying and being reborn at every single moment.

Dependent on birth arise aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair. Thus arises this entire mass of suffering (dukkha).

Suffering is like a wheel. As long as the root causes of ignorance and craving remain intact, mind and matter will repeatedly spring to life. Ignorance is placed first in the chain of Dependent Origination because it rules as the basis of all the other factors, like an influential king. Craving is like the chief minister who does the king’s bidding.

Dependent Origination in an ultimate sense is the endless process of cyclical arising, passing, re-arising, and re-passing undergone by mind and matter. Dependent on impersonal conditions with no indication of any persisting entity that can be taken as “I” or “self,” the ongoing process of arising and passing away is nothing but repeated suffering. Paradoxically, because no one undergoes this suffering, it is said:

“Suffering exists, but no sufferer is found.” No doer of deeds is found, no one who ever reaps their fruits, only empty phenomena rolling on. This alone is the correct view.

Buddha: *“Ananda, it is through not understanding, not penetrating the doctrine of Dependent Origination that the world has become a tangled ball of thread, a bird’s nest, a thicket of reeds, and does not escape from woeful states of existence, from the unfortunate course, from perdition, from suffering in the round of rebirths.”* (DN 15)

The Development of the Faculties

The Practitioner	Feeling	Development of the Faculties
1. A practitioner	When one experiences a sense object with the sense base, there arises in one what is agreeable (liking), there arises what is disagreeable (disliking), there arises what is both agreeable and disagreeable (dull indifference).	1. He regards them as “conditioned, gross and dependently arisen” until equanimity is established.
2. The learner on the path (the streamwinner, once-returner, and non-returner)		2. He is pained, ashamed, disgusted by what is agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable. He sees them as impediments, hindrances to progress. This revulsion is a powerful factor to awakening, like that of a burnt child’s dreading the fire, a wise loathing of worldliness.
3. The Noble One with developed faculties (the Arahant)		3. Whatever he experiences, he feels detached. He abides in equanimity, mindful and fully aware, clinging to nothing as his own.

For an ordinary person, whatever he experiences that is agreeable, disagreeable, and both agreeable and disagreeable, his sluggish mind does not know they are dependently arisen, subject to destruction and ceasing; his latent tendency of defilements immediately comes to the surface, causing him to react with greed, hatred, and delusion, and thus he suffers accordingly.

How fleeting sense impressions are, how rapidly they arise and pass away — just as raindrops on a slightly sloping lotus leaf roll off and do not remain there, or like a drop of water that falls on an iron plate, heated for a whole day, would quickly vaporize and vanish — it is our grasping to them as “I” and “mine” that makes them appear lasting.

Five Contemplations for Everyone


There are these five facts that one should reflect on often, whether one is a woman or a man, lay or ordained. Which five?

1. I am subject to aging, have not gone beyond aging.
2. I am subject to illness, have not gone beyond illness.
3. I am subject to death, have not gone beyond death.
4. I will grow different, separate from all that is dear and beloved to me.
5. I am the owner of my actions, heir to my actions, born of my actions, related through my actions, and have my actions as my arbitrator.
Whatever actions I do, for good or for evil, of these I shall become the heir.

These are the five facts that one should reflect on often.

Upajjhatthana Sutta: AN 5.57

Life is Falling Away



Life and Death

There's no difference between birth and death! Life moves towards death, death moves towards rebirth. In the long journey of Samsāra, one is born, then dies, and is reborn again. This cycle of life is endless. There is neither a first time to be born, nor a first time to die, so why does one celebrate birth, or shed tears for death? It's merely the latent defilement of ignorance beclouding wisdom that makes one dazed and incapable of seeing the truth about life and death.

What's the purpose of life? —Is it simply to drift, toiling and busy, seeking money, status and fame, which cannot be taken with us when we pass away? Or perhaps such people believe that this fragile fame and fortune can provide them security and satisfy their vanity. When such a person finds his physical body approaching death, he will have many regrets and confusion!



*All sentient beings are fond of birth, and dislike death;
We celebrate birth, and mourn death.*

*A*las! Although we have understood this plain truth, why do we still struggle for affection or material possessions, and cannot put them down?

There are many agreeable things and persons that we cling to in life. We hate death because death causes separation from our beloved ones and loss of our cherished possessions. The confusion that death brings is also unbearable.

Why not live with the Dhamma, with a mind inwardly at peace and contented.

One who is detached and liberated, who sees through birth and death, remains at ease with the unpredictable and often invisible changing of causes and conditions.

For one who sees no difference between life and death, though experiencing death, forever lives.

Synopsis of FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The noble truth of suffering (Dukkha sacca):

Birth, aging, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress, and despair are suffering. Association with the unbeloved, separation from the loved, and not getting what is wanted are suffering. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are suffering.

The five aggregates of clinging are: the materiality aggregate, the feeling aggregate, the perception aggregate, the formations aggregate, and the consciousness aggregate.

Materiality aggregate (rūpakkhandha): The materiality aggregate consists of the four primary elements as well as the derived materiality from the four elements, including sensitivity of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, with their respective objects of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangible objects.

Feeling aggregate (vedanākkhandha): The feeling aggregate consists of the three feelings of pleasant, unpleasant, or neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

Perception aggregate (saññakkhandha): Perception perceives the qualities of an object and makes a sign regarding those qualities so that these qualities can be recognized or perceived again in the future.

Formations aggregate (sankhārakkhandha): The formations aggregate forms, or fabricates, the materiality, feeling, perception, and consciousness. In other words they accumulate karma. The Buddha said: “They form the form, bhikkhus, this is why they are called formations.”

Consciousness aggregate (viññanakkhanda): There are six types of consciousness: eye-, ear-, nose-, tongue-, body-, and mind-consciousness. The characteristic of consciousness is to know or cognize the object.

This noble truth of suffering is to be comprehended.

The noble truth of the origination of suffering (Samudaya sacca):

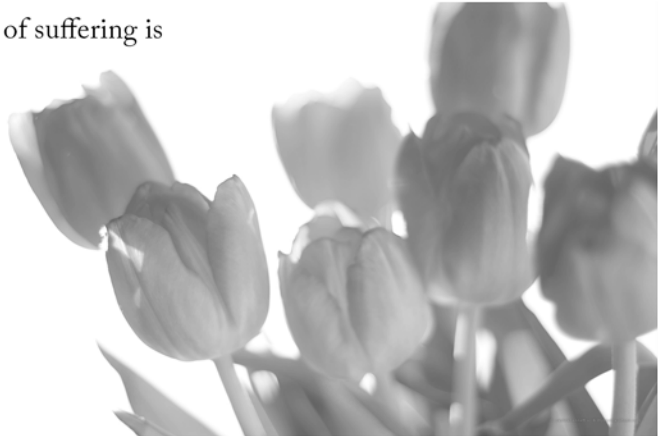
The craving that makes for further becoming—accompanied by passion and delight, relishing now here and now there—craving for sensual pleasure, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

This noble truth of the origination of suffering is to be abandoned.

The noble truth of the cessation of suffering (Nirodha sacca):

The remainderless fading and cessation, renunciation, relinquishment, release, and letting go of that very craving.

This noble truth of the cessation of suffering is to be directly experienced.



The noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering (Magga sacca):

The Noble Eightfold Path, which consists of:

Right view: Understanding the four noble truths.

Right thought: Thoughts of renunciation, non-ill-will, and non-cruelty.

Right speech: Abstaining from false speech, abstaining from harsh speech, abstaining from backbiting, and abstaining from useless speech.

Right action: Abstaining from killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct.

Right livelihood: Abstaining from dealing in weapons, in intoxicants, in animals for slaughter, in poisons, or in the selling of humans, or slavery.

Right effort: 1. Effort to prevent unarisen evil from arising; 2. Effort to discard evil that has arisen; 3. Effort to arouse wholesome states that have not yet arisen; 4. Effort to bring to perfection wholesome states that have already arisen.

Right mindfulness: Contemplation of the body, contemplation of feeling, contemplation of different states of the mind, and contemplation of mental qualities (dhammas).

Right concentration: The first, second, third, and fourth jhānas.

This noble truth of the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering is to be developed.

The Noble Eightfold Path can also be divided into three trainings of morality, concentration and wisdom as shown below:

Right View (<i>Sammā-ditṭhi</i>)	Wisdom Training
Right Thought (<i>Sammā-saṅkappa</i>)	
Right Speech (<i>Sammā-vācā</i>)	Morality Training
Right Action (<i>Sammā-kammanta</i>)	
Right Livelihood (<i>Sammā-ājīva</i>)	
Right Effort (<i>Sammā-vāyāma</i>)	Concentration Training
Right Mindfulness (<i>Sammā-sati</i>)	
Right Concentration (<i>Sammā-samādhi</i>)	



The Teacher of the Dhamma

A monk said: "Dhamma-teacher, Dhamma-teacher' they say, Lord."

"If, monk, anyone teaches a doctrine of disenchantment with decay-and-death, of dispassion and its cessation, that suffices for him to be called a monk who teaches Dhamma."

"If anyone has trained himself in this disenchantment with decay-and-death, in dispassion and its cessation, that suffices for him to be called a monk who is trained in what is in conformity with Dhamma."

"If anyone, through disenchantment with decay-and-death, through dispassion and its cessation, is liberated from grasping, that suffices for him to be called one who has attained Nibbāna in this life."

SN 12.16



An Island Unto Oneself

"Monks, be islands unto yourselves, be your own refuge, having no other; let the Dhamma be an island and a refuge to you, having no other. Those who are islands unto themselves... should investigate to the very heart of things:

'What is the source of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair? How do they arise?'
[What is their origin?]

"Here, monks, the uninstructed worldling with no regard for Noble Ones, unskilled and untrained in the Dhamma of the Noble Ones ... regards body as the self, the self as having body, body as being in the self, or the self as being in the body.
Change occurs in this man's body, and it becomes different.

On account of this change and difference, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair arise. [Similarly with 'feelings,' 'perceptions,' 'mental formations,' 'consciousness'].

"But seeing the body's impermanence, its changeability, its waning, its ceasing, he says, 'Formerly as now, all bodies were impermanent and unsatisfactory, and subject to change.'

Thus, seeing this as it really is, with perfect insight, he abandons all sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair. He is not worried at their abandonment, but unworried, lives at ease, and thus living at ease he is said to be 'assuredly delivered.'" [Similarly with 'feelings,' 'perceptions,' 'mental formations,' 'consciousness'].

SN 22.43

Happiness



"

*There are, O monks, these three feelings: pleasant feelings, painful feelings, and
neither-painful-nor-pleasant feelings."*

Be it a pleasant feeling,

be it a painful feeling,

be it neutral, one's own or others', feelings of all kinds

— he knows them all as ill, deceitful, evanescent.

Seeing how they impinge again, again, and disappear,

he wins detachment from the feelings, passion-free.

SN 36.2

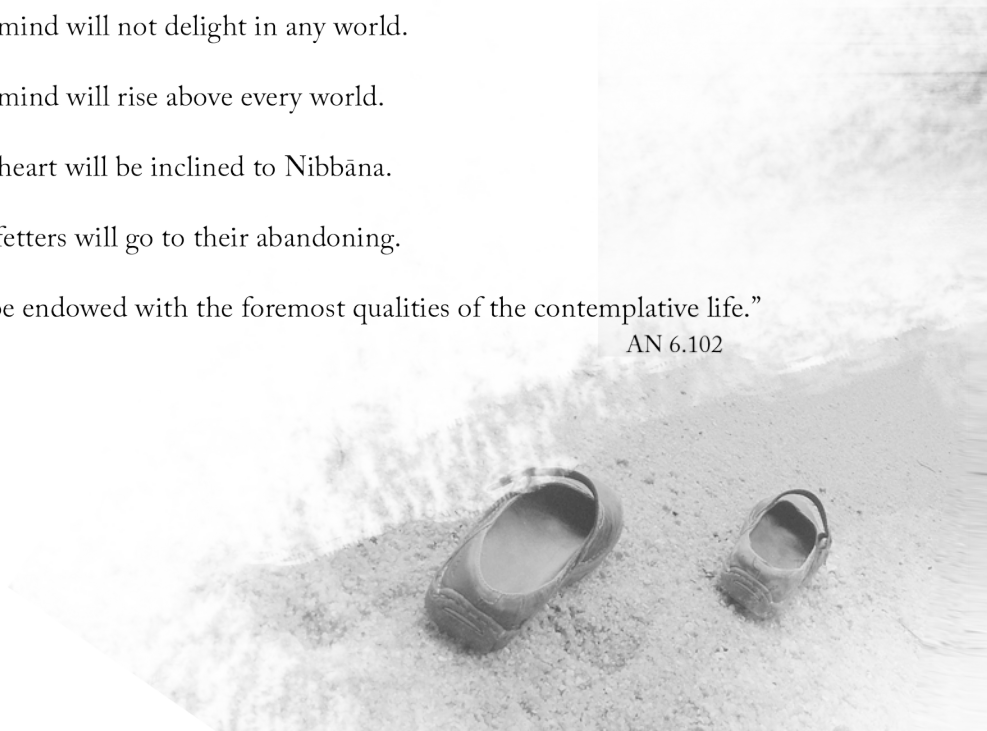
Advantages of Contemplating Impermanence

"In seeing six rewards, it's enough motivation for a monk to establish the perception of impermanence with regard to all fabrications without exception.

Which six?

1. All fabrications will appear as unstable.
2. My mind will not delight in any world.
3. My mind will rise above every world.
4. My heart will be inclined to Nibbāna.
5. My fetters will go to their abandoning.
6. I'll be endowed with the foremost qualities of the contemplative life."

AN 6.102



impermanence

Returning to the Purity of Mind

When there is no external impingement on the senses, the mind is clear and still. The very moment the pleasing and desired six sense objects of form, sound, smell, flavor, touch, and mental object come into contact with the six senses bases, the latent defilement of greed is awakened and the mind becomes agitated, losing its clarity and stillness.

Due to craving, the mind is tormented and the body tenses up. The only thing that matters at this moment is to find a way to satiate the sensual urge and to release the tension in the body, regardless of whether the methods used are skillful or unskillful.

The pleasant feeling felt from enjoying sense objects has a very sticky nature that causes one to strongly cling to them. The mind becomes enslaved causing the body to perform different types of bodily and verbal actions to satiate the craving.

The enjoyment of sensual pleasure, while gratifying to the mind, also clouds the mind and hinders the development of concentration and wisdom. It also strengthens the trait of greed in one's character. Every time one gives in to greed, the potentiality is reinforced. One will become more and more lustful to the extent one finds it difficult to let go of lust whenever it arises.

The tainted mind is like a dusty mirror kept in a messy storeroom. The messy storeroom represents the living conditions of an ordinary person in which the mind is constantly exposed to the sensual excitement of the six pleasurable types of sense objects.

In order to prevent lust from defiling the mind, the Buddha urged us to practice self-restraint by guarding the sense faculties.

Suppose a man were to enter some thorny bushes. There would be thorns all around him in front, behind, to the left and right, below, and above. How can he protect himself so as not to be pricked by the thorns?



By way of mindfulness, so that defilements do not arise through unguarded sense faculties. The thorns can be compared to anything that has a pleasing and agreeable nature, because these things activate craving. Craving is the origin of all suffering and causes repeated births. Pricked by craving, one suffers in this life and in the life after.



Guarding one's sense faculties is like removing the dusty mirror from the messy store room. To restore clarity to the mirror, one still needs to wipe the dirt off the mirror. Similarly, to return clarity and purity to the mind, one trains oneself in both concentration and insight day and night.

Concentration training keeps the mind on a single pure object like the breath for a long time, during which all defilements of mind such as greed and hatred are kept under control. When the defilements are kept under control, the mind returns to its original clarity and tranquility, becoming still, and luminous. The mind has been developed and becomes happy on its own.

Sensual lust loses its initial power to lure the developed mind.

To undertake insight, one applies effort to be mindful of what is happening in both mind and body internally and externally until wisdom arises to see things as they really are – as impermanent, suffering, and non-self.

Repeatedly seeing these three common characteristics of mind and body causes one's mind to become disenchanted and weary of them. The enchantment of seeing mind and body as permanent, happiness, and a self is shattered. The latent defilement of ignorance, which obscures the truth of suffering of mind and body, is made known; the origin of the truth of suffering—craving—is removed.

And the mind returns to its purity.

Die in order to be reborn

Insight sees existence as it really is as—
impermanent, stressful, with no controlling self.
However, how many of us are able to remain steady
when such truth unfolds?

Insight

After repeatedly seeing the impermanence of one's thoughts and emotions, the mind may start to resist the truth it's witnessing, as it goes against our cherished belief in security, pleasure, happiness and permanence.

The resistance is even greater when we realize that we have not the slightest control over what is happening at this moment. Our whole being (existence) is an ongoing process of causal relationships—a constant reaction to randomly arising thoughts.

Are the thoughts real?

When one grasps a thought as “myself” or “mine,” it becomes real. Otherwise, it is unreal.

Following the thought without realizing it is illusory is likened to a madman running here and there aimlessly. Or like a wandering spirit roaming here and there, finding no eternal home (self) in which to settle down.

Life is sustained by clinging to a “permanent self.”

It is unpleasant when we realize the opposite, as this is not the way we are used to living.

To ease this spiritual upheaval requires total acceptance.
Surrender to the truth.

Let the “self” die in order to be reborn.

You experience greater happiness when there is no self to cling to.



Does a monk benefit others?

Then the brahman Sangarava said to the Blessed One: "I say, Master Gotama. We brahmans perform sacrifices and get others to perform sacrifices. And whoever performs a sacrifice, whoever gets others to perform a sacrifice, they have all practiced a practice of merit — the business of a sacrifice — [that benefits] countless beings. But whoever, leaving his family, has gone forth from the home life into homelessness, and tames his single self, brings his single self into tune, brings his single self to Nibbāna: his practice of merit — this business of going forth — is one [that benefits] only one being."



"Very well then, brahman, in that case I will cross-question you. Answer as you see fit.

What do you think? There is the case where a Tathāgata appears in the world, a worthy one, rightly-self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, one who has gone the good way, knower of the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of those who can be taught, teacher of human & divine beings, awakened, blessed. He says:

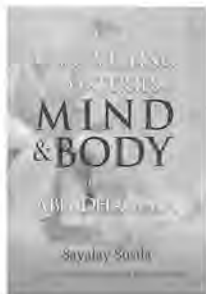
'Here! This is the path, this is the practice that, having practiced, I make known the unexcelled coming ashore in the holy life, having directly known & realized it for myself. Come! You, too, practice in such a way that you will remain in the unexcelled coming ashore in the holy life, having directly known & realized it for yourselves.'

Thus the Teacher teaches the Dhamma, and others practice, for Suchness. And there are countless hundreds of them, countless thousands of them, countless hundreds of thousands of them. This being the case, is this practice of merit — this business of going-forth — one that benefits countless beings, or only one being?"

"This being the case, Master Gotama, this practice of merit — this business of going-forth — is one that benefits countless beings."

AN 3.60

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